

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BUENOS 01534 251954Z
ACTION OES-06

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00
NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-07
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9296
INFO ERDA HQ WASHDC PRIORITY
ERDA HQ GERMANTOWN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
USMISSION IAEA VIENNA PRIORITY
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS PRIORITY

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 1534

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TECH, PARM, AR, BR
SUBJECT: NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING IN ARGENTINA -
SHORT AND LONG TERM PROSPECTS

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 646, (B) BUENOS AIRES 1011, (C) BUENOS
AIRES 1427

1. DEPT. WILL RECALL THAT ARGENTINE CNEA BUILT AND OPERATED A
LABORATORY SCALE REPROCESSING PLANT SOME YEARS AGO AND SUCCEEDED
IN SEPARATING TINY QUANTITY OF PLUTONIUM.
2. NOW THAT IT IS CLEAR THAT PLANS ARE TO CONTINUE BUILDING A
PILOT REPROCESSING PLANT (E.G. REFTEL A), IT IS CLEAR THAT SOME
REASSESSMENT ON OUR PART IS WARRANTED AND THAT ARGENTINE CAPABILITIES
NEED TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AS WELL IN CONNECTION WITH THE
BRAZIL-GERMANY AGREEMENT.

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2. WHILE MANY OF ARGENTINA'S EXPERTS IN REPROCESSING HAVE LEFT
THE COUNTRY, WE ARE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT SUFFICIENT EXPERTISE
REMAINS TO MANAGE THE DESIGN, FABRICATION, ASSEMBLY, AND OPERATION
OF A PILOT PLANT CAPABLE OF REPROCESSING RESEARCH REACTOR FUEL
ELEMENTS. WHILE COSTS MAY WELL IMPOSE SOME CONSTRAINT, SUCH A
PROJECT SEEMS SEEMS TO BE WITHIN THE ECONOMIC CAPABILITY OF ARGENTINA

IN THE NEAR TERM. WHILE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE MAY WELL BE SOUGHT IN VARIOUS MINOR WAYS, WE ARE CONVINCED THAT SUCH A PROJECT COULD CONCEIVABLY, IF NECESSARY, BE COMPLETED COMPLETELY WITH ARGENTINE INPUTS.

4. SINCE ARGENTINE EXPERTISE IN REPROCESSING APPEARS TO EXCEED THAT POSSESSED BY BRAZIL ALONE AT THIS JUNCTURE, SOME MEASURE OF ARGENTINE ASSISTANCE TO BRAZIL, IF THE GERMAN AGREEMENT FALLS THROUGH, SEEMS, IN FACT, TO BE TECHNICALLY POSSIBLE. IT MAY OR MAY NOT BE POLITICALLY POSSIBLE.

5. IN ANY CASE, IN THE LONG TERM, IT CERTAINLY APPEARS AS IF BOTH ARGENTINE AND BRAZIL WILL NEED TO HAVE THEIR POWER REACTOR FUEL REPROCESSED, SAY BY 2000 ANYHOW (SEE REFTEL B). WHILE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF FULL SCALE REPROCESSING PLANTS ARE FRAUGHT WITH ECONOMIC AND SAFETY PROBLEMS, THE TECHNOLOGY IS GENERALLY WELL KNOWN, CANNOT REALLY BE SUPPRESSED, AND EITHER OR BOTH COUNTRIES WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE THE INDUSTRIAL CAPABILITY TO ACCOMPLISH CONSTRUCTION OF SUCH A PLANT BY LATE IN THIS CENTURY, IF THEY DO NOT ALREADY.

6. COMMENT: IN EMBASSY VIEW, WITH ABOVE IN MIND, REVERSAL OF REPROCESSING ASPECTS OF FRG-BRAZIL AGREEMENT AND GENERAL HOLD-THE-LINE POLICY ON TRANSFER OF REPROCESSING TECHNOLOGY, WILL DEFINITELY HAMPER EFFORTS TO CONSTRUCT PILOT PLANTS IN THE SHORT TERM. IN LONG TERM, HOWEVER, AS CASTRO MADERO NOTES (REFTEL B), IT APPEARS INEVITABLE THAT FUEL MUST BE REPROCESSED AND HENCE, AS VIEWED FROM HERE, SEARCH FOR ACCEPTABLE SYSTEMS OF SAFEGUARDS AND SECURITY ON PLUTONIUM HANDLING AND TRANSPORTATION MUST OF
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NECESSITY MOVE FORWARD.
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Message Attributes

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